IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Original) A method for managing printing priorities in a computer network, comprising:

entering priority settings for network print jobs;

receiving a new print job and an associated priority setting into a network printing queue;

comparing the priority setting of the new print job to a priority of other print jobs in the network printing queue; and

allowing the new print job to begin printing without delay if it has the highest priority in the network printing queue.

2. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the priority settings are entered by a network administrator.

3. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the priority settings are entered by a network printer user who has submitted said print job.

4. (Original) The method according to claim 1, further comprising postponing the new print job until higher priority print jobs in the network printing queue have finished printing.

5. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the step allowing the new print job to begin without delay further comprises:

suspending a print job that is currently printing if the new print job has a higher priority;

printing the new print job in full; and

resuming the suspended print job.

6. (Original) The method according to claim 5, further comprising using different colored sheets to separate different print jobs.

7. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the priority settings may be changed, according to changing circumstances.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein changes to the priority settings are entered by a network administrator.

9. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 7, wherein changes to the priority setting are entered by a network printer user who has submitted said print job.

10. (Original) The method according to claim 1, further comprising providing a graphical user interface for displaying the estimated time for completing a print job.

11. (Original) The method according to claim 10, further comprising sending prompts to users at set time intervals updating the estimated time for completing a print job.

12. (Original) The method according to claim 1, further comprising receiving a maximum time limit for postponing a print job, regardless of its priority.

13. (Currently Amended) A method for managing printing priorities in a computer network, comprising:

receiving a priority for a network print job, wherein the priority for the network print job is set by a network printer user who has submitted said print job; and

sending the network print job and the priority to a network printing queue.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Original) The method according to claim 13, further comprising:

receiving changes to the priority settings, according to changing circumstances; and

sending the changes to the priority settings to the print queue.

16. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 15, wherein the changes to the priority settings are made by a network printer user who has submitted said print job.

17. (Original) The method according to claim 13, further comprising:
receiving the estimated time for completing a print job; and
displaying the estimated time for completing a print job to a user.

18. (Original) The method according to claim 17, further comprising:
receiving a maximum time limit for postponing a print job, regardless of its priority; and
sending the maximum time limit to the printing queue.

19. (Original) The method according to claim 17, wherein the step of displaying the estimated time for completing a print job is by means of a graphical user interface.

20. (Original) The method according to claim 19, further comprising receiving prompts at set time intervals updating the estimated time for completing a print job.

21. (Original) A computer program product in a computer readable medium for use in a data processing system for managing printing priorities in a computer network, the computer program product comprising:
instructions for entering priority settings for network print jobs;
instructions for receiving a new print job and an associated priority setting into the network printing queue;
instructions for comparing the priority of the new print job to the priority of other print jobs in the network printing queue; and
instructions for allowing the new print job to begin printing without delay if it has the highest priority in the network printing queue.

22. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 21, wherein the priority settings are entered by a network administrator.

23. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 21, wherein the priority settings are entered by a network user.

24. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 21, further comprising instructions for postponing the new print job until higher priority print jobs in the network printing queue have finished printing.

25. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 21, further comprising instructions for receiving changes to the priority settings, according to changing circumstances.

26. (Original) A data processing system for managing printing priority in computer networks, comprising:

means for entering priority settings for network print jobs;

means for receiving a new print job and an associated priority setting into the network printing queue;

means for comparing the priority of the new print job to the priority of other print jobs in the network printing queue; and

means for allowing the new print job to begin printing without delay if it has the highest priority in the network printing queue.

27. (Original) The data processing system according to claim 26, wherein the priority settings are entered by a network administrator.

28. (Original) The data processing system according to claim 26, wherein the priority settings are entered by a network user.

29. (Original) The data processing system according to claim 26, further comprising means for postponing the new print job until higher priority print jobs in the network printing queue have finished printing.

30. (Original) The data processing system according to claim 26, further comprising means for receiving changes to the priority settings, according to changing circumstances.